

Sources disclose testimony

CIA plotted to slay Castro, files show

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New York Times

WASHINGTON — The Rockefeller commission has learned of documents supporting the charge that the Central Intelligence Agency contracted with the Mafia in a plot in 1961 to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro, sources said Monday.

The sources said a former official of the Justice Department during the Nixon administration has told the commission that Justice Department files contain Federal Bureau of Investigation memoranda confirming that the CIA contacted Sam Giancana, a Chicago racketeer, and John Roselli, a soldier of fortune with organized crime connections, in a plot to assassinate Castro.

The existence of the documents is the first public indication that there is written material to support the allegation that the CIA conspired with organized crime figures in such an assassination attempt.

The files are now in the hands of John C. Kenney, acting assistant attorney general for the department's criminal division, the sources said.

Kenney, who is expected to transfer the documents to the commission, declined to comment on the matter. David W. Belin, chief counsel to the commission headed by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, also declined to comment.

As early as 1967, columnist Jack

Anderson has reported allegations that Robert Maheu, a former FBI agent and manager of Las Vegas properties for billionaire Howard Hughes, recruited Giancana and Roselli in a plot to assassinate Castro.

According to Anderson's version, Roselli, with CIA help, organized one attempted assassination of Castro, armed with poison capsules supplied by the CIA. In another attempt, Anderson has said, the group tried to infiltrate sharpshooters to kill Castro during a public meeting.

The sources said they did not know if the files went into such detail, but they do confirm that Giancana and Roselli

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had been working with the CIA at the time.

One source said the files contained a memorandum signed by J. Edgar Hoover, the late FBI director in which

Hoover discussed whether Giancana's CIA connections may have protected him from the full weight of a Justice Department prosecution in the mid-1960s. Another source said the files showed that Roselli's relationship with the CIA came up during the Justice Department investigation of him.

Sources do not know whether the assassination attempt was approved by President Kennedy or any other high Kennedy administration official. Two former aides to Robert F. Kennedy, attorney general at the time, have told the New York Times that Kennedy told them the CIA was plotting with underworld figures.

In the mid-1960s Giancana and Roselli were the subjects of justice department organized crime prosecutions in separate cases. Giancana was subject of an investigation by Edward V. Hanrahan, then-U.S. attorney for Chicago, and the FBI.

He was taken before a federal grand jury in 1964 and granted immunity, but still refused to answer questions. A federal judge ordered him jailed under civil contempt for the life of the grand jury. Giancana spent 12 months in the Cook County jail as a result.

After his release, Hanrahan recommended that a new grand jury be called and that Giancana be given immunity and jailed again if he refused to answer questions. The Justice Department decided otherwise and the prosecution was halted.

Sources said Hoover became concerned that Giancana had received preferential treatment because of his CIA connection.

Hoover, these sources said, noted in the memoranda that Robert Kennedy had told him that Giancana had cooperated with the CIA and that if the Justice Department pressured him too much he could compromise the CIA.

Nevertheless, several sources said the CIA connection was not a factor in the decision to halt the prosecution of Giancana.

William Hundley, formerly in charge of the Justice Department's organized crime section, said the decision not to bring Giancana before a new grand jury was made only because the department felt this would be harassment and would rest on shaky legal ground.

It was also in the mid-1960s that Roselli came under Justice Department scrutiny. He was convicted for failing to register as an alien and for conspiracy to rig card games at Los Angeles' Friar's Club.